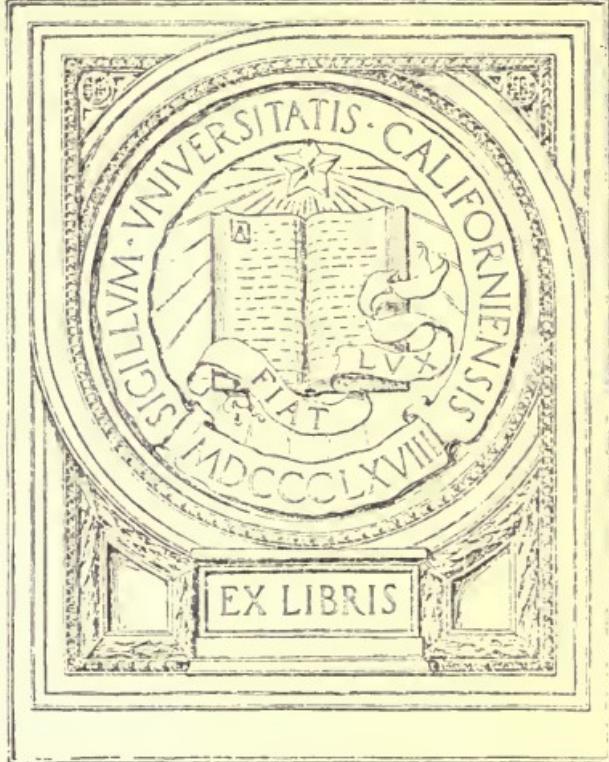


THE RESCUE OF
DESDEMONA &
OTHER VERSE by
WILLIAM HOOPER
HOWELLS



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES



For G. P.

desiring her to
look upon the
gift with a
continuance
"more in sorrow
than in anger!"
"The Geus"

October, 1917.

(Published by them
at, George Blank:
The Butterfly Inn -)

THE RESCUE OF
DESDEMONA
& OTHER VERSE



**THE RESCUE OF DES
DEMONA AND OTHER
VERSE BY WILLIAM
HOOPER HOWELLS**

WILLIAM HOOPER HOWELLS
BY WILLIAM HOOPER HOWELLS
ILLUSTRATED

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PS
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There's nothing serious in publicity

*SETTING at defiance the
immemorial antagonism
existing between publishers and
authors, and utterly ignoring
this ancient feud with all its
hatred and distrust, I dedicate
this little book with cheerful
amity and child-like confidence to
the Editors of "The Butterfly."*

W. H. H.

"Blessed are the peacemakers"

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THE AUTHOR'S EXCUSE

IT is customary for most authors to introduce themselves and work to their readers through the medium of a more or less prolix "Preface," "Foreword," "Introduction," "Apology," or "Explanation."

The infinite number and variety of disingenuous excuses that have been employed by them to palliate the just indignation of a long-suffering public, leave but one to the author which has not already been used to the vanishing point of patience, and upon which he seizes with avidity.

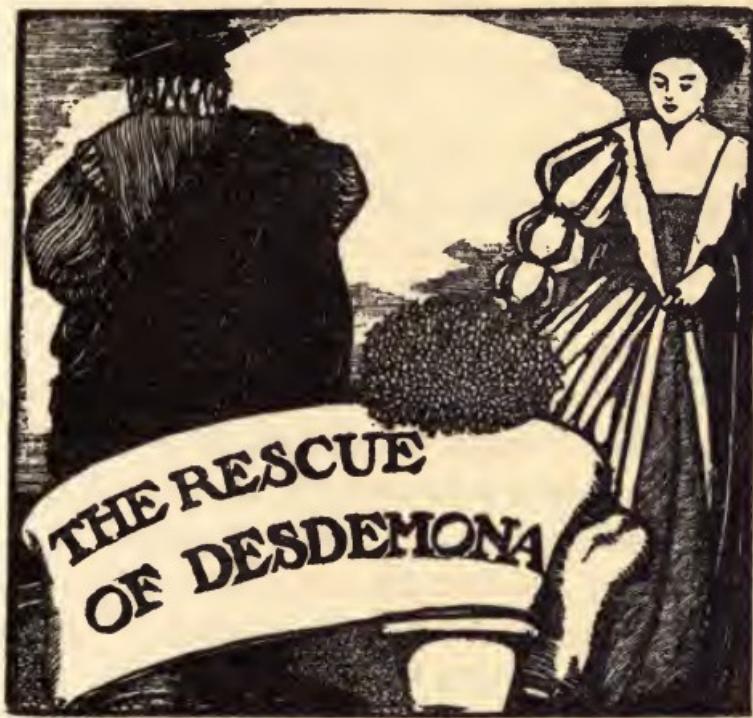
Happily the sentiment of mankind covers the errors of extreme youth with the stainless mantle of charity. The sins and follies of the

young become crimes and misdemeanors in the old, and for this reason only dare the author of *Desdemona*, handicapped with lack of years and experience, diffidently approach his readers, assured that through his youth alone he must expect absolution.

If any other excuse were necessary for the publication of this afflictive volume, it may be found only by the profoundly astute, in the very old, hackneyed and vulgar motive on the part of this writer to experience the deliciously novel sensation of speculating upon his own exertions, and enjoying a reasonable share of the anticipated deficit.

W. H. H.

THE RESCUE OF DESDEMONA



IN Venice, long ago, when doges great
Maintained with patriotic zeal the State ;
When glory like a mantle robed the queen
Of Adria's waters with a golden sheen ;
When speedy galleys bore her warriors brave
The foe to conquer, and the friend to save,
Or sailed afar from Campanile bells
To smite the Turk within the Dardanelles—
'Twas then, in that remote, heroic day
Occurred the incidents that move this lay,
And stirred the heart of many a merry maid
To thoughts amusing, when the evening shade

Descended on the streets that ebb and rise
With muffled cadence 'neath the Bridge of Sighs.

'Twas night. Brabantio in his palace fair
Slept lightly as a man enslaved by care.
An ancient senator of some renown,
Holding high place within the island town,
He spent the half retirement of his age
In public estimation rich and sage.
He slept, but through the twilight of his mind
Beheld a dream of evil slowly wind,
And startled woke to hear about his door
A tumult like a battle, and a roar
Of voices raucous, bidding him awaken,
For that his only child her leave had taken
Without his leave, and gone with one Othello,
A soldier of the State, a splendid fellow,
Whose greatest crime was that of being yellow.
Brabantio from the casement poked his head,
And argued with the rioters below ;
Disturbed and much incensed, he sternly said
That to the devil they might promptly go.
But when he recognized Roderigo there,
A youth whose suit for Desdemona's hand
Had been non-suited, blowing through the air
Hot wads of warning and of reprimand,
He thought it best to ascertain with speed
What reasons could be found for such a deed.

These failing, he resolved that young Roderigo
Should find his person parted from his ego.
So, summoning his servants in hot haste,
They searched the palace, cupboards, attics, halls;
The screens and furniture were much displaced,
But all in vain—no answer to their calls
Fell on the anxious sire's attentive ears—
A fact which strongly verified his fears.
Robing himself with rage and other clothing,
He joined Roderigo, voicing loud his loathing
For Moors in general, but Othello most,
To whom he oft had played the gracious host,
Unthinking that the soldier's tales of slaughter
Could win the favor of his listening daughter.
To talk and trade, or gamble for simoleans
With negro, Turk, or even with Mongolians,
May do—but when they marry our relations,
It rather spoils the gaiety of nations.
So, filled with vengeance, out into the night
Went old Brabantio with retainers ten,
Each with a flaming torch and sword bedight,
To join with young Roderigo and his men,
Thus making quite a formidable squad—
And forth they fared, resolved the Moor to prod.

Now, one Iago, connoisseur in sin,
Othello's "Ancient"—meaning understrapper—
Was the prime mover in the shocking din,

In truth, Roderigo's prompter in the matter.
But when he saw Brabantio coming down,
He said to Rod, "Dear boy, I hold it fit
And best for me that I should instant flit
To some more quiet portion of the town;
But you will find me with my hated master,
Engaged in nursing this unfledged disaster
Which I will nurture with such cunning art
That, when mature, a feather it will shed
To wing the arrow that shall reach the heart
Of this same Moor, and bow his head
In dark humiliation—patient wait;
To Desdemona this shall be your gate—
Be gay, and hope—put money in thy purse,
And help the ancient senator to curse."

Thus saying, to his heels Iago took
With such good speed as to escape the look
Which old Brabantio, with suspicion fleet
Cast all about him when he reached the street.
Loud the magnifico's wild lamentation,
Denouncing bitterly miscigination.
He mourned his daughter's loss in every key
That touched the chord of hopeless misery,
And then asserted, as an afterthought,
That direful spells of magic had been wrought
To blind her senses and her reason blight,
Ere to the Moor she could her fealty plight—
To all of which Roderigo gave his backing,

Asserting he himself had read of cases
Where youths of merit had received a sacking
From maids bewitched by men of other races:
Which clearly shows, Caucasians even then
Possessed a hate for worthy colored men.

Meantime Iago to his chief had sped,
And thus, with seeming diffidence, he said:
“My lord, I late have heard your honored name
Allied with all the epithets of shame.
The old Brabantio in a fury swears
That you, by hellish, necromantic snares
Have ta'en away his daughter; and declares
Your life shall pay the forfeit for this act;
And hither shortly comes with venom packed,
By relatives and vengeful friends attended
To see your great career abruptly ended.
I was sore tempted the old ass to slay,
And many times my sword was fain to leap
In wrath well justified, his breath to stay.
But 'tis my fault. I never yet could keep
The thought of murder long enough aglow
To nerve the arm which should impel the blow;
Though in the rage of battle, I confess,
My active blade knew naught of idleness;
And on the trembling field, without remorse,
Piled the red earth with many a pallid corse.
But look, my liege! Brabantio approaches.

Let us away, escaping his reproaches.”
The Moor with lofty thought and self-control
Said, “Nay, Iago. Shall my perfect soul
Stoop cringing then to any craven fear?
No! Let them come, mine Ancient, I am here!”
And come they did, a very pretty crowd,
With torch and sword and imprecations loud,
And flashing arms and robes of Tyrian dye—
A shining show, presenting to the eye
A scene which, doubled in the grand canal,
Shone like a gay nocturnal carnival,
Mocking night’s sombre visage and beguiling
The sable goddess into fitful smiling.

But on Brabantio’s livid countenance
No traces of a smile were seen to glance
When he observed the Moor with hauty pose,
Audacious, stand before his very nose.
It seemed, indeed, for one brief moment’s flight,
As though the devil had contrived a fight.
Iago swaggering forward cocked his plume,
And to Roderigo said, with wink of gloom,
“You, sir, shall be my foeman in this row.
Come, draw your sword, and we’ll begin it now!
In combat I’m a hungry epicure,
And long to drape your giblets on my skewer.”
The Moor, however, bade the riot cease;
For, though his occupation made for peace

Through war alone, he justly, to his thinking,
Claimed rank and title to commence the pinking.
The old Brabantio during this confab
Had never ceased the shrinking air to stab
With vocal weapons, and abuse to bellow
With sundry maledictions on Othello.

"Where is my daughter," quoth he, "damnéed
black?

Thy wizard limbs shall stretch upon the rack.

No power but sorcery could maid seduce
From home patrician, save by some abuse
Of nature and of reason. Sooty skin
Might never yet a lily maiden win.

I charge you, officers, this man arrest;
To prison take him; I will do the rest.
To prosecute this case before my peers
I dedicate my ducats and my years."

Just at this point Othello's right-hand man,
One Cassio, came abruptly on the scene,
And, pausing not belligerants to scan,
Went to his chief, and with respectful mien
Said, "Sir, the Duke is most importunate
To see you at the Council of the State,
And I am charged to bring you with all speed
Before him; nothing should your haste impede.
Late Cyprian news the Senate has provoked,
And your advice is urgently invoked."

Then to Brabantio turned the Moor, and said,

" You hear the message. Peril not your head
By thwarting my obedience to the Duke ;
Othello never shall deserve rebuke
For laggard steps when voice of duty calls—
Therefore make way. Cassio, Iago, come."

At this, the Senator to silence falls.

His *posse comitatus*, looking glum,
Fell back to right and left before the Moor,
Who swept between them stately and secure.
Then old Brabantio shouted with some vigor
This final insult, which contained much gall :
" You're nothing but a pestilential nigger—
Simply a nigger—do you hear? That's all!"
Now, I maintain Brabantio coined this word,
As previous to that time 'twas never heard.
Through ancient archives, sacred and profane,
A careful quest has only proved in vain.
The word was born of hate, by hatred flung
With dire intent to sting—and so it stung;
And ever since has run its shameful paces,
Employed and loved by Anglo-Saxon races.
I have seen negroes black as opera hats
Fight to the death like fierce Kilkenny cats,
Because, when swapping hot disparagement,
One or the other utterly forgetting
The ethics of abuse, too eloquent
Had given to the air that word, upsetting
In one brief moment all ideas of peace,

Which honking vanished like a flock of geese.
So you'll agree that in this word so weird
Resides a potency which should be feared.
Othello heard the taunt, and pausing turned,
Looked at Brabantio with eyes that burned,
And said, with quiet and majestic air,
“My lord, you go too far—but have a care—
Consider this: no bird is half so vile
As that which doth himself his nest defile;
And, if this will not close your blatant maw,
Remember that I am your son-in-law.”
The Moor resumed his way serenely proud,
While silence for a moment held the crowd.
The Senator incensed soon broke the spell
And cried, “We to the Duke will go as well,
And there before the Council of the State
Will I my own and daughter’s wrongs relate,
And crave redress, which no one dare deny:
My cause will triumph and the Moor shall die!”
So said, so done. Brabantio and all
Followed Othello to the ducal hall.

In the great Senate chamber of the State
The Duke and Council sat in high debate,
Resolving means to thwart the Moslem host
Which sailed in sixty galleys for the coast
Of Cyprus, with intent the isle to sack
And take away that very bric-a-brac

Which now adorns our Central Park museums—
Placed by Cesnola there with loud Te Deums.
The hour was late when through the portal entered
A group on which the Senate's eyes were centered.
First came Othello, by his staff attended,
In flowing robes of price and armor splendid;
And then Brabantio, with a visage green,
And his retainers—possibly seventeen.

Imposing silence with a waving hand,
The Duke arose and spoke in accents bland :
“Valiant Othello, sit at my right hand ;
Thrice welcome are you, for the public need
Is such that we must operate with speed.
To you, Brabantio, also welcome goes,
For your advice is poison to our foes.”
Up spoke the seignior with exceeding ire:
“Your Grace, I come not here on state affairs
Which well may pause before a grief so dire,
A wrong so terrible, that other cares
Seem but to me as trifling and as light
As nip of flea against a lion's bite.
My lord, by sorcery and enchantment swayed,
My daughter Desdemona, virtuous maid,
Has by a damnéd villain been betrayed,
Abducted from my palace and conveyed
To spot unknown. I therefore beg your grace
That my petition shall have primal place,

And that the law may instantly proceed
To save my daughter and avenge this deed.”
Astonishment and stillness all unbroken
Fell on the Senate when these words were spoken ;
Until the Duke the following decision
Pronounced judicially with firm precision :
“ If what you say, Brabantio, is true,
The law shall be administered by you ;
You shall decide the punishment exact,
Most fit to recompense such dastard act.
Who is the caitiff subject to this charge ? —
For he no longer shall remain at large.”
Upon the face of the magnifico
There gleamed a smile of premature delight,
And with a jeweled finger pointing slow,
He said, “ I charge the man upon your right.
The false Othello is the woman thief
That worked through charms this deed of shame
and grief.”

He paused, and all the Senate in confusion
Supposed Brabantio suffering from illusion.
Besides, the Moor, a general of renown,
Was never yet so needed by the town
To check the Turk, and backward swiftly thrust
him,

Or on the coast of Cyprus simply bust him.
Therefore the Duke, commanding silence, said,
“ Othello, you have heard this plea severe ;

Make answer, then, I charge you on your head,
The truth relate, nor for our justice fear.
In law, the evidence on either side
Must still be heard before the court decide ;
And oftentimes the story first rehearsed,
After the second, proves a bubble burst.”
Thus conjured by the Duke, Othello rose
With dauntless mien, confronting friends and foes,
And said, “Most potent, grave and reverend sirs,
My very worthy and approved good masters,
That I am charged with this offending, stirs
My spirit more than blazing war’s disasters.
That I have ta’en this old man’s child away
And married her, is patent as the day;
But as for spells and charms, or magic potions,
Devices dark, or other devilish notions,
My open life, untouched of secret guile,
Might well refute such allegations vile.
I’d rather be a fiddler from Cremona
Than win by fraud the lovely Desdemona.
Rude, sirs, am I of speech, and lack the skill
Your ears with subtle eloquence to fill,
For all my youth, in camp and battle spent,
Has little fostered studious ornament ;
Yet will I strive a story to recount,
Which may, my lords, your prejudice surmount ;
Of how I prospered in the lady’s wooing
And what black arts attended on my suing.

This tale, to bear conviction to your thought,
Should by my wife have ample reinforcement.
I therefore beg the lady may be brought;
My life I stake on her complete endorsement.
Go, then, mine Ancient, with attendants three,
And hither Desdemona bring to me."

At this the old Brabantio interjected,
"This suits my book, though rather unexpected.
I did not think the Moor had such a cheek.
He lies, and bluffs and boasts like any Greek!
My daughter will refute his paltry claims,
And I shall laugh to see the scamp in chains."

The Duke, however, said with easy grace,
"Seignior Brabantio, kindly close your face;
Othello will proceed with his recital,
To prove the lady his by rightful title."
Without delay the Moor his tale began,
And thus the interesting story ran:
"Her father loved me; to his palace fine
Invited me full oft to sup or dine;
And though he hates me now, I must confess
That with his terrapin and champagne sec
He was profuse almost to an excess,
Till I was frequent loaded to the neck.
At his request I told him of the frights
And dangers I had borne; the frantic fights,
When in the deadly breach, with hope forlorn,
I had been stricken in the battle's storm;

The cannibals by whom I was enslaved;
The desert Dinosaurus that I braved.

The Duck-billed Platypus, whose horrid peck
Had ripped a hole athwart my galley's deck,
Walked through the orifice, and there and then
Devoured alive a moiety of my men—

'Twas very impolite, as no one knew him—
And being slightly vexed, by Jove! I slew him!
Compared with him in size the ancient roc
Was little larger than a bantam cock.

'Twas also mine to hint that on the Nile
I once was swallowed by a crocodile,
And lived for many days and trying nights
Exclusively upon the creature's lights;
Until one morn I heard an auto honk,
And recognized my friend the jabberwonk.
He at my instance killed the saurian beast,
Ripped up the monster and myself released.

Then, too, I told him, not without a sigh,
About the cheerless anthropophagi—

Pigmies, whose heads beneath their arms are seen—
Which makes them awkward for the guillotine
And fills the sad beholder with vexation,
Repelling any thought of annexation
By matrimonial association.

These stories Desdemona partly heard
While pouring wine, or carving of a bird;
But running out to buy a can of beer,

And being sometimes there and sometimes here,
Did with her interest greatly interfere.
And so she begged that I would please detail
In chronologic order all the tale,
So that she might my whole career survey
Like to the scene of some distressful play.
This then I did, from boyhood to the end ;
And for my pains she gave a world of sighs,
And told me frankly if I had a friend
Would truly woo her, he might come anigh
And boldly sue, if he my tale could tell
In terms like mine, or only half so well.
Upon this hint, my hopes to heaven flew.
I looked into her eyes of thrilling blue,
And felt the anguish of a love as great
As ever struggled with the gods of fate.
The rest you know, my lords; and if in this
There hides enchantment, or aught else amiss,
I am prepared the penalty to pay,
Say to the world ‘good-bye,’ and close the day.”

Othello paused. A murmur of applause
Followed his story and approved his cause.
The Duke, concurring with the general tone,
Observed that, speaking for himself alone,
He thought that such a tale, so deftly told,
Would doubtless take an overmastering hold
Upon the heart of almost any maid,

And candidly confessed he was afraid
That his own daughter hardly could resist
The charm of such a verbal alchemist;
And therefore he advised Brabantio
To stay his suit and let the matter go—
With Moor and Desdemona patch a truce,
And send the angry passions to the deuce.
For, after all, if from the wine-skin leaks
One-half its contents through the bearer's cheeks,
What sort of idiot he, its loss deplored,
Beggars himself still more by promptly pouring
The precious residue, with haste insane
And wanton folly, down the kitchen drain?
To this Brabantio briefly made reply:
“My lord, your wisdom clearly I descry;
And should it seem by Desdemona's story
That she herself was party to this wooing,
I will renounce my late intentions gory,
And mar no more their billing and their cooing.
But here she comes. Daughter, attend to me;
Look round this chamber; tell us if you see
The one to whom obedience is due—
He whose authority comes first with you.”
The lovely Desdemona, thus addressed,
Surveyed the scene with eyes of gentian hue
Which found Othello by instinctive quest,
And beamed with joy upon his face to rest.
Long was the look, while all the Council bent

To hear the answer Desdemona sent.
Then turning to her father, thus she spake
In tones that made the soul of music wake:
“To you, sir, I protest my life I owe,
And what I am in learning or in grace;
But to the Moor must my allegiance go.
The force of Nature’s law in this we trace,
For, as my mother left her sire for you,
So I to such example shall be true.”
Thus Desdemona closed her brief oration;
Othello’s heart leaped up with adoration.
The Senators and Duke were all elate,
The Moor was saved for service to the State,
Brabantio, gloomily resigned, confessed
That to submit to fate was sometimes best;
But warned Othello that, by her deceived,
His daughter never more could be believed.
To all of which Othello smiled defiance,
And on his wife swore absolute reliance.
Roderigo mourned and thought the chances poor
For ever winning love from Mrs. Moor.
Iago smoothed his brow, but deep within
More deeply plotted treachery and sin.
And so the Moor was ordered to take ship
That very night, and make a hasty trip
To Cyprus, while the lady’s earnest pleading
Gained from the Duke an order briefly reading
That she to Cyprus should next day proceed

On his own private yacht, the *Centipede*,
Attended by Iago and his wife,
Emilia, with other escort fit
To make excursion safely through the strife,
Should they unhappily encounter it.
This business being speedily concluded,
The company departed each his way,
Leaving Roderigo to be more deluded
Under Iago's base, malignant sway.
These two then confidentially inclined,
The fool and villain each expressed his mind.
The first began, and this, Roderigo said :
“Iago, all my cherished hopes are dead ;
My goose is cooked ; my blooming cake is dough ;
My heart is bankrupt. Presently I go
To feed the lobsters in the Grand Canal
And end a ruined life. Good-bye, old pal.”
Then spake Iago with satanic sneer,
“Soul of a chipmunk, what is this I hear ?
Throw up the game when fortune just begins
To show relenting and her smiles disburse
By handing you the very card that wins ?
For shame ! go to ! Put money in thy purse.
Take ship with me and my fair charge to-morrow ;
Meantime fly 'round the town and ducats borrow.
Be near the lady, and some happy chance
Will most assuredly your cause advance.
Go seek for shekels and the fat doubloon,

And I will guarantee within a moon
The Moor and Desdemona, now so fond,
Will rage and execrate the marriage bond.
Cash is a goad to hurry slow events ;
Be well advised by me—collect your rents ;
To uttermost extent your wad expand,
And I will weave a net which, strand by strand,
Will grow so large that greater than the Moor
Could not escape its mental meshes sure.
Therefore away, nor like a dodo peek ;
The festive copeck diligently seek,
While I confusion raise by ways oblique.”
Much cheered by this infernal exhortation,
Roderigo felt a pleasing exultation ;
Declared his hopes revived, his vision cleared,
The phantoms of despair all disappeared ;
His mind made up to go upon the cruise,
Selling, before he started, to the Jews
The small remains of that which was of late
A very portly and admired estate.
And so, on this fool’s errand firmly bent,
He said good-night, and on his way he went.

Iago left alone to crimes devising,
Touched by the moon, began soliloquizing,
And in the ear of night made this confession
Of villainy too wicked for expression :
“ Thus do I turn this fool into a bank

From which I draw full many a useful franc.
With my attainments and experience ripe,
How could I otherwise endure this snipe,
This rotten artichoke, this fulsome weed,
But that I feast upon his idiot breed
And find amusement in the subtle skill
With which I bend such rabbits to my will ?
As for Othello, whom I dearly hate,
There must be something doing to abate
His joy, and turn the current of his bliss
Away from sunlight and the cheerful air,
To flow in darkness through that deep abyss
Gulping the solemn waters of despair.
His mind I will abuse with hints so vague
That, ere he dreams it, stricken by the plague
Of jealousy, his wife he shall suspect,
And think that Cassio occupies her heart
To his exclusion. Then will he detect
In acts of innocence, deceiving art ;
And urged along by me, in fitting time,
May cap his folly with a deed of crime.
That Cassio's place would then to me accrue
Seems just as sure as that twice one are two.
So will I work this devil's brew to boil,
And find delight, amusement, in the toil.
Let conscience still with feeble fools reside,
No truckling scruples shall my course misguide.”

NIGH to the Syrian coast there lies an isle
Within a wine-dark sea, so passing fair
That ardent summer's everlasting smile
Finds a perpetual enticement there.
Here stands Olympus beautiful and vast,
On which the older gods held ancient sway,
Ruling the vanished peoples of the past,
And now with them lapsed ruthless to decay.
Here grew the choicest, most luxuriant vines,
With figs and olives, on the bending hills;
Here for the Malta Knights were pressed such
wines

As only royal flagon sometimes fills;
And here the Persian roses never-failing
Dispersed their attar perfumes so regaling
That merchant vessels 'round the island skirting
Could hardly keep their sailors from deserting;
While Cyprian ladies, for their beauty noted,
Attracted almost everything that floated—
In fact, it may be understood between us
That Bacchus here was born, and also Venus—
And thus you see why Venice overworked
To keep this luscious land from being Turked.

At Famagosta, on a terrace wide
That overlooked the city and the tide,
Flanked by the massive gates and gloomy walls
Of fort and castle higher than St. Paul's,

There stood one morning Cassio and three
Good soldier friends who watched the distant sea,
As being anxious first of all to mark
Othello's storm-tossed and belated bark.
Not long they waited when, surprised, they saw
A gallant group arrive and nearer draw,
And Cassio knew at once fair Desdemona
By the bewitching twist of her kimona
And her attendants, among whom there were
Iago and his wife, Emelia fair;
And fatuous Roderigo, too, was there,
With others of less note, all glad to get
Upon the friendly earth; for wringing wet
They found the boisterous and raging ocean,
From which they shrank, especially the motion.
Delighted, Cassio advanced and took
The hand of Desdemona with a look
Expressive of the most profound respect,
As though he thought her of the saints elect;
Gave a good welcome to the Cyprian ground,
And to his friends presented her all 'round
With words of praise so steeped in pure sincerity
That none who listened could suspect his verity.
Then turning to Emelia, he kissed her,
And told Iago only as a sister
Did he salute the lady; and politely
The Ancient begged to view the matter lightly.
With ill concealed disgust Iago hinted

That virtue was a coin not often minted ;
A currency with little circulation
Between the men and women of his nation—
An observation heartily condemned
By Desdemona, who refused to lend
Her lovely countenance to such a treason
Without some personal, provoking reason.
Just now there was no joy in anything
On earth or sea for her which did not bring
Some news of her dear lord Othello's weal,
With safe assurance of his tardy keel.
Now hardly had this sentiment been uttered
When all the harbor guns began to roar ;
Little and big, with flame and smoke they
sputtered,
Saluting some arrival off the shore,
While round the cape might every eye discern
Othello's mighty galley make the turn
And run for port with flags and banners flying,
Three banks of oars in splendid tempo plying,
And all some great emergency implying.
A gallant sight; for truly, on the level,
That boat was coming like the very devil.
It reached the shore and, with a heavy shock
Not well retarded, ran against the dock.
The Moor in haste, omitting ceremonial,
Attended by some members of his suite,
Forgetting everything not Desdemonial,

Mounted the castle stairs with rapid feet
And there before him on the esplanade
Beheld his gentle lady and her maid.
With every indication of delight
His spouse gave welcome to her dusky knight,
While he explained what tempests had attacked
His vessel, which indeed was badly wracked,
A very slight misfortune when compared
With what the Turk sustained, for 'twas declared
That all the Moslem fleet, dispersed and sunk,
Had no more fight than poor Cervera's junk ;
And Venice, therefore safe from paynim threat,
Might rule in peace and minimize her debt.
The Moor thus briefly summed the situation
And from all sides received congratulation,
But most from Desdemona, whose warm eyes
Meant to Othello more than Paradise.
And so, with mutual joy and great content,
Toward the castle all the party went.

Sometimes across the philologic stage
There stalks a word which actually seems
To have descended from a former age,
Bringing some spiritual force which teems
With power to raise the phantoms of the past,
And paint upon the canvas of the mind
Imaginary scenes and pictures vast
Of old events and peoples now declined ;

And such a word—coincidence amusing—
The Moor is on the very point of using,
When, turning to Iago, he commanded
Him to the quay to see his “coffers” landed.
“Coffers.”—No sooner said but you behold
The tribute paid to kings; a prince’s ransom;
The loot from cities sacked; barbaric gold;
A pirate’s plunder, and his captives handsome;
The spoils from many a violated fane,
Of church or temple, sacred or profane;
Jewels and priceless stuffs, and armor rare;
And diamonds only conquerors might wear.

In all the shabby wealth that Wall Street offers
There’s nothing to remind a man of “coffers,”
Which simply demonstrates, as all will own,
The picturesque from modern life has flown.
Our predatory classes, unlike theirs,
Are ugly as a lot of unlicked bears;
And all the jargon of our money mart
Depraves the ear and desolates the heart.

This commentary, doubtless, you will think
Is out of place and but a waste of ink.
Not so; for, if from history we take
No thought or lesson for our own consumption,
We might as well improving hope forsake
And quit the game for lack of equine gumption.

But to our tale. Othello and his spouse,
With Cassio and their numerous retainers,
Leaving the terrace, went into the house,
Where they were met by Cyprian entertainers,
Who wined and dined them with a welcome
gracious,
In marble halls and dainty gardens spacious,
While on the esplanade Iago lingers
With Rod, whose waning cash he freely fingers.

The evident devotion that existed
Between Othello and his fairer half
Was wormwood to Roderigo, who insisted
The time had come to write his epitaph ;
And all his thoughts despondent, suicidal,
Made his pursuit of Mrs. Moor seem idle.
Iago, on the contrary, maintained
That Desdemona had a roving eye
Which now on Cassio was softly aimed ;
It was an easy thing to prophesy
That all her admiration for Othello
Would soon be vested in some other fellow.
Venetian glass was beautiful, but frail :
Venetian ladies also were the same ;
Their infidelity, an oft-told tale,
Would find example in this very dame.
The more Roderigo praised her noble parts
The more Iago dabbled in detraction,

And so effective were his slimy arts
That poor Roderigo was inspired to action,
Supposing that Iago's horrid scheming
Was altogether in his interest leaning ;
As partial recompense for many marks
Borrowed and gone — fled like a flock of larks ;
For, even in that day, there's no denying
That money was essential to high flying.
Iago then his wretched plot outlined,
And made it plain to young Roderigo's mind
That while on guard that night he must devise
Some pretext for a wordy altercation
With Cassio, who was never over wise
When stirred by wine or insubordination.
This being done, Iago said that he
Would be on hand the whole affair to see
And push along the general confusion
Toward a very serious conclusion,
Through which friend Cassio should fall from grace
And he become successor to his place,
Which, being once accomplished, he could press
Roderigo's aims to an assured success,
As well as take one rival from the running —
Which he considered tolerably cunning.
To all of this Iago's tool agreeing,
They said adieu and parted for time being
To meet before the citadel at night
To breed revolt and discord to incite.

Again alone, Iago's introspection
Found outlet in the following reflection :
“ My mind persuades me that indeed I am
A favorite offspring of the Devil's dam :
All common rogues have casual slants of shame,
Remorse, regret, repentance ; but my name
Shall never to such weakness be allied.
Let feeble scamps their consciences divide ;
My soul's a unit bent on mischief still,
And most triumphant in accomplished ill.
This Moor is ever constant, noble, kind ;
These virtues are abhorrent to my mind ;
Besides, 'twas whispered once within my ken
That ere I wed Emelia she was seen
With him alone at night, long after ten,
At Lido, walking slowly on the green
Along the margin of the Adriatic
With crooked steps suspiciously erratic.
Of course I don't believe this idle tale,
But to pretend belief will much avail.
Then Cassio : he's a bird of gorgeous feather,
And they seem tolerably free together.
This day before my very face he kissed her,
And thought excuse to make by saying “ sister.”
It wrung my gall to watch Emelia grinning.
I'll slay them both before they get to sinning.
But night comes on apace. To-morrow's sun
Shall see the work of Satan well begun.”

Thus musing, to the galley he descended,
And for the time his monologue was ended.
The watch was set. Beside the castle gate
The Moor and his Lieutenant, chatting late,
Othello said, "Now, Cassio, my boy,
We've had a splendid time, a day of joy ;
Still, ever let that angel moderation
Stand watch with us and guard our reputation.
One cup of wine too much has often slain
More than a siege, and dyed with lasting stain
The shield of some commander whose control
Of self and soldiers vanished in the bowl.
I will retire. Good-night. May peace attend
Your vigils till the morning sun ascend."

With this Othello promptly disappears.
Iago enters, having watched his chance,
And like a devil fish for Cassio steers.
With amiable mien and friendly glance
He thus accosts him, with a jovial air :
" Well met, Lieutenant. By the gods, I swear
Thou hast no ranking fellow in my heart,
And others hold thee high. Just here apart
Await two Cyprian gentlemen who beg
The favor of your presence. A new keg
Is being broached, a very precious booze,
Whose virgin taste they say you shall not lose."
" Tut, tut, Iago, go—I pray you, go
And make excuses ; for, as you well know,

My brains are plastic, and I cannot drink
As others do, and this is why I shrink
From your polite coercion, and beside,
I think that I've already had enough.
Let me in confidence to you confide
I know the meaning well of '*quantum suf.*'
Of all my drinks I keep a memorandum,
Because it is not wise to drink at random ;
And by the record here, which I'm perusing,
It seems to-day that I have done some boozing.
Let's see : Five high balls and four whiskey sours,
Two bottles of Chianti at my lunch —
These kept me busy during morning hours ;
This afternoon I had one Medford punch,
With six gin fizzes, four Manhattans dry,
And several beers — but those I don't put down.
This evening also with the General, I
Absorbed three flagons to this blooming town ;
And so I *think* — but pshaw ! my dear Iago,
They never used to think in old Chicago,
But say that one poor cocktail less or more
Would never wash a sinking bark ashore.
Where are your friends ? One goblet I will drain
With you and them in memory of the *Maine.*"
With great alacrity Iago ran
And ushered in three gallants, and a man
Who bore a jar of wine, an ancient juice
With latent potency to raise the deuce.

And this it did; for in a little space
Poor Cassio, half seas over, left the place,
Encountered Roderigo on his round,
Who gave for provocation some slight ground,
Which Cassio magnifying, drew his steel
And chased the fool, who promptly took to heel,
Nor could a pig pursued more loudly squeal.
Right through the castle court the hunt came
tearing,
Roderigo yelling and mad Cassio swearing.
The Cyprian gallants there who heard the din
Were shocked to see this breach of discipline;
Montano interposed to save the flying,
And for this act came very near to dying,
For furious Cassio, all restraint resenting,
Attacked the gallant, who, his blade presenting,
Put up a lively fight in self defense
Against the soldier lost to common sense.
Not long the silly combat raged between 'em
When Cassio pinked him in the duodenum.
The General with his staff just then arrives
And bids them stop on peril of their lives.
With voice of wrath Othello briefly orders
An explanation of these wild disorders;
Moreover he remarked the scene amazing
Was almost equal to a college hazing.
A sneer so bitter from a man so great
Caused every one with fear to hesitate.

Cassio declined to speak ; Montano said
In rather feeble accents while he bled,
That only to protect his life he drew,
Nor could he now impart a single clew
Which might account for Cassio's violence
Or justify such wanton arrogance.
Iago listened calmly and exulted,
Well knowing he would be the next consulted.
“ Honest Iago,” said Othello then,
“ My high opinion of your acumen
Assures me that from you I may obtain
The facts about this lawless hurricane,
This cyclone of revolt which spreads dismay
From Famagosta to the lower bay.
Speak, sir, and let no sentimental ruth
Affect your story to conceal the truth.”
Thus urged, the Ancient, with assumption meek
And spurious regret, began to speak.
“ My lord, I swear by all the gods above
I'd rather die than violate my love
For Cassio, and perform so sad a task.
Release me from this duty. Let me ask
That some one else less partial than I am
Should tell the tale of this unlucky dram.”
“ What!” cried the Moor. “ A dram, a dram,
you say ?
On with the tale ; I brook no more delay !
This, coming to the W. C. T. U.,

Would make a hot and most repulsive stew.
Go on!" Iago then with resignation
Again began his artful recitation.
He told but how a little time ago
These Cyprian gentlemen with Cassio
Were drinking bumpers of Falernian wine
In goodly amity, without a sign
Of pending quarrel or an armed dispute.
And so he left them; but soon hearing strife,
Returned in haste to find Montano mute
And stricken to the very verge of life—
While Cassio with his bloody snicker-snee
Defied the world with homicidal glee.
Othello heard and in his eyes there danced
The ruby flames of rage; around he glanced
And on the culprit let his vision rest;
The silence every mother's son oppressed
For some brief space, and then he sternly spoke
Those celebrated words which few can hear
Except in jest or as an idle joke
Without some craven evidence of fear:
"Cassio, I love thee well, this heart is thine,
BUT NEVER MORE BE OFFICER OF MINE!"
Enough. The sentence passed, the men disperse.
Montano goes attended by a nurse.
The Moor retires, but Cassio like a stone
Stands motionless, distracted, and alone.

No, not alone. His friend Iago stays,
And cat-like, gloating, with his victim plays—
“ Why, man, cheer up, the worst is not to come;
’Tis true you’ve put the island on the bum
And lost your high command, but after all
What was it but a common midnight brawl
After a day when half the men, I think,
Of this fair isle were mostly on the blink ?
Let fools for errors past supinely grieve,
The wise are prompt their losses to retrieve.
To-morrow to fair Desdemona go
And beg her interest in your restoration.
The Moor, just married, will be soft as dough
And must assent to her solicitation.
I heard her say that you in her regard
Were seated high. Be hopeful, then ; bombard
Her heart with your petition ; constant sue
That she her lord may reconcile to you.
This do without a rest or intermission,
And on my sword you’ll win your lost commission.”
These words in Cassio’s ears were welcome tenants,
For, cashiered and dejected, the Lieutenant’s
Whole thought was self-destruction. Life without
A soldier’s honor and batallion’s pomp
Was no more value than a brussels sprout,
Or noxious gnat-fed adder in a swamp.
Therefore some mouse-like hopes began to crawl
About the massive cheese of his despair,

And, growing bolder, on the rind they fall
And excavate a roomly lodgment, where
They grow in fatness with amazing ease.
The trick is called "the disappearing cheese."
Thus heartened, Cassio to the project drew,
Grasping the straws his friend Iago threw,
With many thanks for counseling so sage
A plan to mitigate Othello's rage.

"And as for wine," he cried in tones convincing,
"That is a matter that will bear no mincing.
From this time forth I'll never lift a flagon,
But deck the summit of the water wagon,
And may my head be taken from my trunk
If ever days to come find Cassio drunk.
Good-night, good Ancient, and for your advising
My gratitude is recompense devising."

Solus, Iago hugged himself in glee
And said, "What blooming fools these mortals be:
My conduct has a kind and friendly seeming,
And yet with damned malevolence is teeming.
When Cassio to the lady makes his suing,
I'll manage that the Moor shall happen by,
And shape the incident to his undoing
As easy as a spider takes a fly.
The more she pleads for Cassio's retention,
The more he shall her motives fair suspect,
And if my mind fail not of fine invention
I'll have the Moor and Cassio badly wrecked.

Emelia must her mistress also move
To urge her lord with obstinate insistence,
Making this plea a little test to prove
His love, and gauge the power of his resistance.
Thus her benevolence all misconstrued
Will lead the fool, Othello, to conclude
That Desdemona's heart has gone astray,
And fill his soul with anguish and dismay.
Thus will I mold events, beyond a question,
By the hypnotic process of suggestion—
A scientific cult in which I revel,
Inspired and aided by my friend the devil.”
Just then Roderigo, finding calm prevail,
Came back and sang this melancholy wail—
“Iago, by the gods, where am I at?
But now before this drunken Cassio cat
I fled in panic like a vermined rat.
And as for running with the hounds in chase,
My very natural and proper place,
I seem to play the fox in this excursion,
An object of pursuit and dogs’ diversion.
My money, too, is spent and most of it
Has gone to stimulate your tardy wit.
Experience such as this goes far to show
That your proceedings are a world too slow.
Back, then, to Venice I will shortly sail
And, like a fox, still try to save my tail.”
A scornful smile Iago’s lips confessed

As he, responding, these remarks addressed—
“How poor are they who by impatience rash
Reduce a half-built edifice to smash.
What temple rises in an afternoon?
What week can show all phases of the moon?
Be then content; your work is doing well;
Cassio has been cashiered; your rival gone,
The field is open for you; who can tell
What luck to-morrow’s sun may shine upon?
Go to your quarters and by this be cheered—
Cassio, your worst obstruction, is cashiered.”
Thus saying, off he went upon his rounds
And left Roderigo to his fox and hounds—
A simile, the which he found most pleasing,
As evidence of his own skill in teasing.

The day these curious events succeeding
Found Cassio heartily engaged in pleading
His cause with Desdemona, who assured him
His rank and honor should be soon restored.
She knew this sad experience had cured him,
And felt the great devotion of her lord
Was such that no request of hers could stay
Or fail to win his glad responsive yea.
Cassio enchanted, grateful made adieu,
And sinking on one knee as lovers do,
Her hand he took, with gentle fervor kissed,
And then without delay himself dismissed.

As fate would have it, by Iago steered,
Exactly at this point the Moor appeared
Through portal at the great hall's furthest end,
And both observed the elegant tableau,
The gallant manner, and the courtly bend
Which marked the style of handsome Cassio.
Now in these modern days of virtuous habits
Tis not good form among our common rabbits
To kneel and kiss the large industrious paws
Of ladies who are wedded to our friends.
In fact, to be so caught might prove a cause
For courts and lawyers and fat dividends;
For lovely legal gentleman who thrive
On dirt and discord and domestic broils;
Destructive insects in the family hive
Who rob the honey to reward their toils;

But in the sixteenth cycle 'twas no sin
To kiss a hand or chuck a pretty chin,
A common usage by most husbands noted
Without offence, and very often quoted
As evidence to show what judgment rare
Had led them to select a wife so fair.
Othello, therefore, never would have thought
Of finding fault unless he had been taught,
And fate malignant had a tutor wise
In his good Ancient, who impulsive cries,
"I like not that." Four baby words, yet still

Full steeped with poison to engender ill.
“I like not that” may be so said and looked
As to convey significance immense,
And so it was. Iago deftly hooked
The Moor confiding, and his common sense
Became a worthless and perverted tool
Fit only for the uses of a fool.
Of course Othello asked him what he meant,
And this more rapid made his own descent.
Iago in reply began to prate
About his honesty, and hesitate
To make an answer frankly as demanded,
As though in mortal terror to be candid,
Lest something he was bound to keep concealed
Should come to light and be at length revealed.
His master all these various antics viewed
With growing interest and solicitude,
And roundly told his Ancient to explain
What fearsome thought was sticking in his brain.
He had observed his manner most minutely.
Nothing escaped his eye, which saw acutely
Those signs which any rascal might enact,
But which when coming from a friend well tried,
An honest man, were certain to attract
A swarm of thoughts that would not be denied.
’Twas then Iago felt his gudgeon nibble,
And with the line of truth began to quibble.
Mysterious importance, air of gloom,

Made each word seem a messenger of doom.
“Othello, well I love thee. My dear soul
Has ever held thee on its highest altar,
And therefore, being honest, I enroll
Myself thy friend, nor can I weakly falter
In doing thee a service, even if
For being honest I receive a biff.

Is it not true that Cassio was your aid
When you were courting this Venetian maid?
Did he not seemingly your cause espouse
And go between you bearing notes and vows?
Cassio is comely; his complexion fine
Presents a contrast violent to thine;
And then he has a fashionable lisp;
No enemy could say his hair was crisp;
His manner, courtly and ingratiating,
Sets all the women's hearts a-palpitating.
In fact his elegant exterior
Compared with yours is quite superior.
But what of that? Most gracious and refined,
Your wife beholds your visage in your mind—
I heard her say so—and no natural change,
I trust, will ever cause her heart to range.
She will solicit that you now revoke
The just decree that drunken Cassio broke,
And by her earnestness in this request
Her love for Cassio may be shrewdly guessed.”
Othello heard this subtle poison drip,

And clutched the sword he lugged upon his hip ;
His eyes began to roll and show their whites
Like Pompey paralyzed with ghostly frights ;
His voice of rough command grew weak and
husky ;

His lips were dry and actually dusty ;
Such strange disorder all his being filled
Iago hoped that someone might be killed.
O jealousy ! thou art indeed a curse
Which damns the good and makes the wicked
worse ;

Disintegrates the texture of the soul ;
Leads reason captive, blinder than a mole ;
And turns the tender heart, where all was well,
Into the seething cauldron of a hell.

The Moor, with this disease inoculated,
In storm of moods conflicting hesitated,
But, by his Ancient, being well advised,
Resolved to watch and wait and play the sneak,
And keep his feelings pretty well disguised
For some days longer — better say a week.
This being understood, they went to meet
Their wives, with brows unconscious and discreet.
No sooner had Othello made salute
Than Desdemona opened up her suit :
“ My lord,” she cried, “ your coming is most apt.
Cassio has just been here, in sorrow wrapped,

Imploring me to beg that you'll restore
Him to his rank and try his faith once more.
So terribly he feels at this disgrace
He does not dare to look you in the face.
And I have pledged my word, most gracious lord,
That this petition shall have your accord,
Well knowing his devotion to yourself,
His faithful services and scorn of pelf."

Othello heard, and in a voice of pain
Began with great reluctance to explain
That he would doubtless the petition grant,
But not just then; 'twas true he might recant
Some other time; now, being indisposed
To act, he begged the matter might be closed.
And having thus expressed himself so meanly,
He and Iago went away serenely.

Serenely but in seeming, for the Moor
Perceived the verity of this amour,
And, tortured to the soul with this conception,
Cursed like a Turk the obvious deception
With which his wife the wanton Cassio backed,
Until his heart came near to being cracked.
The dew of anguish on his forehead broke,
Which seen, Iago relished as a joke
And with obsequious smugness wisely spoke,
"My lord, of jealousy beware, beware;
For, to the jealous, trifles light as air
Seem confirmation strong as chains of steel;

Logic and reason lose their saving power
When frantic passion makes the senses reel,
And Satan laughs triumphant in that hour.
You have no single proof on which to act —
A mere surmise, unbolstered by a fact.
But, as I love you, mine shall be the task
To furnish all the evidence you ask.”
“By all the gods, you shall!” Othello yells,
“Or else make ready for the deepest hells.
Fail not, or on my sabre I’ll expose
Your corse a banquet for the island crows!”
“Alas!” the villain sighs, “and this, my lord,
For being honest is my strange reward.
Farewell, sweet rectitude, and you, fair truth,
Henceforth shall be but memories of youth.
Fidelity, adieu; thy honied breath
Taste not, Iago, for it smells of death.”
At this reproach Othello backed his oars.
His words retracting, sadly he implores
Iago to forgive an outburst weird,
And still assist him till the sky is cleared;
On which the Ancient kindly gave his hand,
Spoke absolution, swore that he would stand
Beside his master till the wrong he bore
Should be avenged with retribution sore.
And so, in amity and peace arrayed,
They go to guard-mount or the dress parade.
Iago still his blighting venom squirting

Finds the atrocious sport indeed diverting.
Meantime fond Desdemona, left in grief,
Took counsel with Emelia for relief.
The latter, being by Iago spurred,
Contended that the Moor was quite absurd,
But that a pleading still more pertinacious
In Cassio's cause would prove all efficacious,
And begged her puzzled mistress to be firm—
No matter how the General might squirm —
That his Lieutenant now so underrated
Should in his place and rank be reinstated.
To this advice Othello's wife consenting,
Resolved to make a strenuous assault,
But little dreaming that the Moor, dissenting,
Would turn her kindness to a deadly fault ;
So from her eyes the dewy drops she wiped
With handkerchief her lord in Venice gave her,
A handkerchief Emelia swiftly swiped
When dropped by accident ; and not to save her
Could Desdemona ever find that bit
Of lace, nor find the slightest trace of it.
At which we need not wonder much, because
From innocent Emelia's nimble claws
It was to those of good Iago passed,
And then by him was most adroitly cast
In Cassio's wardrobe, where, when later found,
It caused a fine dramatic situation,
A tangle dense, which might indeed confound

A simple Moor, whose shreds of education,
Picked from the ash cans of the empires old,
Were mostly bits of tin, but sometimes gold ;
Few scraps of sterling worth, but more of Brum-
magem,
Got here and there wherever he could rummage 'em.

To bring about a climax to his taste
Iago found he had no time to waste.
Roderigo, now bamboozled to the limit,
With restive ire declared the deuce was in it
If he would tolerate another day
Procrastination, juggling and delay.
He seized upon the Ancient, buttonholed him,
And this in brief is really what he told him :
" Iago, I demand a strict accounting
For monies lent you, easily amounting
To seventeen hundred ducats ; also rings,
Bracelets, and girdles, brooches, other things
Which you to Desdemona have conveyed,
Enough to buy compliance from a maid
Of vestal orders, in a convent coop,
Who never shot the chutes nor looped the loop.
For these rich signs of my infatuation
You have brought messages of consolation
And promises of secret meetings which
Could only more and more my heart bewitch ;
And yet this morning, when most circumspect

I made salute, she gave the cut direct ;
Which lends me reason to believe that you,
A double-dealing scamp of darkest hue,
Are using me to pluck as you may deem
Best to promote your own infernal scheme.
Return my jewels, give my money back,
And I for Venice will at once make sail.
Refuse—and, by the lunar zodiac,
I will to Desdemona with my tale
And either get my gems or find out why
The lady is so difficult and shy.”
Like to the cloud which holds a deadly stroke
To kill a man or pulverize an oak
Was fell Iago’s brow when Roderigo
Began his rather aggravating dun ;
But when he closed, like innocent *bambino*,
His face was frank and cheerful as a bun,
And he explained—the insults all ignored—
How this plain talk had in his estimation
Roderigo much exalted, and deplored
Fair Desdemona’s foolish hesitation ;
Now that, instead of being but a muff,
He knew Roderigo for the “real stuff,”
He would admit that perhaps he had been slow,
To be more sure, but that ’twas Cassio
Who really blocked the way, which clearly proved
That Cassio must be at once removed :
An easy task ; for when to-morrow night

The gay Lieutenant, after supping late
With Cyprian lady, made adieu polite,
Let bold Roderigo meet him near the gate,
And winning safety from the midnight dark,
With one swift thrust put out his vital spark.
He would himself be near to aid the fray
And see that Cassio never got away.
To this arrangement, certainly nefarious,
Roderigo offered *contra* reasons various,
But in the end, by flattery overruled,
Consented, and again was badly fooled.
The Ancient cut him off with hasty coaching
Because he saw the jealous Moor approaching,
And gloating like a fiend by crime elated,
Beheld the wreck his cunning had created,
While to himself he softly meditated :
“ Ah, there you are, my excellent good master.
A sleepy snail would surely travel faster.
Thy step elastic totters with the load
Of inextinguishable pain. The toad
That fattens on the vapors of a sewer
Is not more noxious than the thoughts that swim
Through every convoluted aperture
Of thy tormented brain from rim to rim.
Not mandragora nor the poppy’s juice
Shall ever soothe those eyes, with yellow shot;
No oriental balms from far conduce
To that sweet sleep which innocence begot

But yesterday ; no more the Persian rose
Shall ever minister to thy repose.”

Then to the Moor with fine solicitude
He turned and begged in sympathetic tone
A few brief words. He hated to intrude,
Or see his chief dejected and alone,
But he had something pertinent to say,
Which honestly could brook no long delay.

“Honest Iago,” groaned the Moor, “I must
In thy good offices implicit trust
To quell or verify the doubts which rend
My soul to tatters. Tell me, then, my friend,
What I should do, in this vile slough of shame,
To find one solid spot whereon to stand—
One little rock of fact on which to frame
The vengeance that invites my ready hand ?

Vengeance, Iago, and I tell thee more,
I’d rather keep a corner grocery store
And send my wife about to peddle greens,
Sell codfish rank, and measure lima beans,
Than bear upon my brow for all to see
Those ornaments invisible to me.”

“Tut, tut,” Iago cried ; “my lord, this storm
Of feeling seems to me in wretched form.
From straws and feathers tempests do not grow ;
The wise with some discretion mark their woe ;
The vague suspicions that now plague your wit
I will confirm like proofs of holy writ ;

From doubt to certainty your mind shall pass
And see the truth as in a looking glass.

Last night with Cassio in his room I slept,
And when the little hours began to creep
I startled woke in fright, but silence kept,
Amazed at Cassio talking in his sleep.

'Twould take *three weeks* to tell in decent phrase
How warm his words in Desdemona's praise,
Extolling charms which even I to name
Would be committed to a sin profane.

Then from his breast he took a 'kerchief rare,
A fabric delicate as misty air,
On which I saw by slant of moonlight pale
A sacred ibis scratching of his tail,
All hand-embroidered in a faint design,
Of pallid amber, like a Spanish wine.

This handkerchief he kissed and oft caressed;
Talked to it, too, and coddled to his breast
As *gage d'amour*, a souvenir of bliss
By Desdemona given with a kiss."

The stricken Moor this deadly poison drank,
And to the pits of flame his spirits sank ;
In broken voice he said that well he knew
That 'kerchief delicate ; there were not two
Such webs of lace in all the Orient ;
It was the gift that he his wife had sent
That time when vows of love to him addressed
Had made this dreary orb an Eden blessed.

Now hell itself the word of doom had written:
The traitors should with sudden death be smitten.
And off he went, impatient of delay,
To find what Desdemona had to say.
That gentle lady, guiltless, unafraid,
Observed from far her husband drawing nigh,
But noted not his garments disarrayed,
Nor the portentous rolling of his eye.
She only thought she saw a fit occasion
To use a stronger dose of moral suasion
In aid of Cassio, whose frank distress
Seemed a reflection on her poor success.
Therefore, no sooner had the Moor arrived
Than she began with dignified coercion
To plead her client's cause, and so contrived
To clench the Moor's suspicion and aversion.
He raved in words almost beyond belief,
And bade her bring at once a handkerchief,
A certain very precious bit of lacery
On which could faintly be discerned the tracery
Of sacred ibis scratching of his tail,
The very one he gave her on that night
They heard the chanting of the nightingale
Singing an obligato to their plight.
At this demand the lady looked confused,
Declared she had it somewhere, but refused
To bring it forth until her lord relented,
And to be friends with Cassio consented.

In tragic tones the Moor then told his wife
That on this 'kerchief hung her very life;
'Twas wrought with magic at the midnight hour,
That time when great Orion felt the power
Of Venus radiant shining in the zenith,
And over her with fond attraction leaneth— .
An occultation twenty lives of men,
Though stellar gazers, ne'er might see again.
The worms that spun its 'tenuated threads
Were nurtured on the dryad-haunted trees
In temple garden, where the lily beds
Tempted from Sicily the Hybla bees;
Its colors were of strange and mystic dyes
Distilled at night from mummied mermaids' eyes;
The web was deftly spun by sybil armed
With spells and necromantic incantations
Wherewith the adverse furies might be charmed
To fill its owner's life with mitigations.
This sacred heirloom was his mother's gift,
With admonitions serious conveyed
To carefully preserve with cautious thrift,
And part with only to that happy maid
Who should confess her love for him conclusively,
And pledge fidelity to him exclusively.
This talisman would keep her from duplicity
And fill her welcome days with all felicity,
Make strong her husband's love as gravitation,
Her home a dream, a heavenly habitation.

But let her lose or give this amulet,
And desperate disaster and regret
Should, with a red and overwhelming flood,
Sweep her and all her house away in blood.
“ This was the occult web I gave to you,
And see how speedily the spell works true:
A vessel just now landed on the shore
Brings tidings that your father is no more.”

Did Desdemona shriek, or faint, or cry?
Oh, no! She looked her husband in the
eye;
She gazed into those orbs of yellow fire
And calmly said, “ Othello, you’re a liar.
A letter from my father, just received,
Declares him well but very much bereaved.
He feels the loss my absence long imposes,
And graciously a handsome check encloses.
As for your silly tale of witch-made rag
In starlight woven by some hairless hag,
It makes me weary. I would have you know
That on the breast you say is white as snow
I wear a sacred counterguard from death
Which makes the fates and furies hold their
breath;
A fiend-defying fetish brought from Rome—
The left big toe nail of good Saint Jerome,
Which bears the seal of the pontificate

For authenticity, with day and date.
The innocent wild ass that knows no reins,
The ass that feeds on Asiatic plains,
Is not bereft so thoroughly of brains
As you, with effort to inspire belief
In baby fiction of your handkerchief.”
Indignantly she turned and walked away,
Leaving the Moor without a word to say.
Alone, he plucked his dagger from the sheath
And with its point began to pick his teeth,
Dumbfounded, almost speechless at the brass
With which his wife had marked him for an ass.
Our modern husbands never feel surprise
At any startling phrase their wives devise;
In fact the ladies often search the zoo
For apt comparisons and insults new
With which to decorate their vassals true;
In throngs they crowd unpleasant monkey houses
To find those terms best fitted for their spouses.

The Moor, however, with a mind envermined,
Instead of pausing, grew still more determined
To see in all that Desdemona said
An added reason for his vengeance dread;
So next day with Iago he consulted,
Described his interview and what resulted,
And also mentioned how he was insulted.
Thereat his Ancient, though for carnage thirsting,

Could very hardly keep himself from bursting.
But said, of course such conduct in effect
Was consonant with every vile defect —
A theory quite in keeping with his master's,
And sure to foster terrible disasters.

Mad with the agony which rent his mind,
The Moor, Iago ordered and assigned
To do away with Cassio that night,
While he himself to everlasting flight
Would put the soul of Desdemona, fair
But false and fickle as the Cyprian air.

The details all arranged, the knave and fool
Went off to play a game of bottle pool,
And on the way, while stopping at the bank,
Othello kindly raised his Ancient's rank
To be lieutenant, an immense distinction,
As just reward for Cassio's extinction.

The slow descending sun, a ruby sphere,
Above the brow of Mount Olympus hung,
And gazing through the tinted atmosphere
Enamored saw that isle, whose beauty sung
By bards immortal when the world was young,
Still held its sway, intoxicating sweet
As when of gods the immemorial seat.
Othello, leaning on the parapet
Which swung its arms around the castle yard,
Oblivious to the hour, by fiends beset,

Inhaled the scented air with disregard,
Beheld the phantom moon from Syria rise,
Unnoted viewed the purple of the skies;
For nature may not show her charms to him
Whose heart is bent upon a deed of sin.
Long meditated he, when from below
He heard a galley land, and trumpets blow,
And feet ascending on the causeway stair,
And then detected voices that he knew,
Among them Ludovico's, he could swear.
Yes, Ludovico with his retinue
Had just arrived, from regal Venice sent
With some instructions from the government;
He had been met by Desdemona surely,
And with his niece was talking now securely.
He said in brief the Council had recalled
Her husband, ordering Cassio installed
As Governor of Cyprus in his stead—
A move which seemed to please the lady greatly.
She spoke of how her lord and Cassio lately
Had fallen out, and hoped the new arrangement
Would end their most deplorable estrangement.
All this Othello heard in anguish sweating.
It seemed to him as though the fates, forgetting
Their usual kindly care, had thrown him down,
To be the scoff and jeer of every clown.
Though writhing cruelly in his distress,
He pulled himself together none the less,

And went to meet the messenger with hearty
Good welcome for himself and all his party,
Accepted the dispatches, which he read,
Then rudely told his wife to go to bed,
And managed, so at least my story goes,
To grind his iron heel upon her toes.
This surreptitious act a blunder seemed,
An awkward accident; but loudly screamed
The lady, and her uncle, not so slow,
Said, "Keep your heels, my General, for the foe"—
An ambiguity which looked like wit
To every fellow but the fellow hit.
With secret rage Othello pallid grew
As any raven's wing that ever flew,
But well dissembling, kindly took his guest
To dine in state upon the Cyprian best
And drink the wine which knights of Malta grew,
Asserting better this world never knew.
'Twas late when, hospitable duties ended,
The Moor retired, and to his chamber wended
In deep considerate effort to decide
By what particular means to kill his bride;
Selecting finally a method glorious,
Eliminating pain, yet not uproarious.
He paused outside the room, within the hall,
And leaning desolate against the wall
To sad reflections rendered up his soul,
Bidding adieu to all that life held dear—

The splendid pomp of war, the cannon's roll,
The neighing steed, the battle's frantic cheer,
And that great pastime where ambition stood
Almost a virtue, making carnage good.

In brief, he cried, "Creation's but a blot ;
Othello's occupation's gone to pot !"

The castle bell struck twelve with vibrant stroke,
And from his reverie the Moor awoke
To realize that Cassio was no more,
For this is what Iago doubly swore,
And sure Iago was an honest man,
Certain as fate to execute his plan.

Into his room Othello slowly crept,
Saw Desdemona, was convinced she slept.
One lovely foot from out the cover peeked
Half hidden by a rag with phenol steeped,
A sight which brought him shaking to his knees,
Filled with remorse and contrite agonies.

The gas was burning brightly, and with awe
A fleeting smile upon her face he saw ;
And yet relentless, obdurate he rose,
To bring the tragic story to a close.

And this is what he said ; but every word
Was quite distinctly by the lady heard,
Who thought it safer sleeping to pretend
Than meet perchance a most untimely end :
" Blow out the gas, and thus put out the light ;
And if this flaming minister I quench,

I can again with match relume the night
And so remove the nauseating stench ;
But if this air oblivious stops thy life,
Thou fairest pattern of abhorrent guile,
I know no antidote with virtue rife
That can again restore thy matchless smile,
Give to the world the radiance of those eyes,
Or bid thy clay in classic beauty rise.
My heart is breaking with this last farewell,
Which yet must be, for thou art false as hell.”
Thus said, and making all the casements tight,
Othello paused and then blew out the light;
Retreated from the room and closed the door,
With unknown depths of anguish to explore.
For no long time the Moor with feverish haste
Strode up and down the hall, and as he paced
He heard the noise of discord and strange cries
Up from the town below alarming rise,
And to himself remarked in accents tired
That Cassio’s death had probably transpired,
And caused some little rioting which might
Place good Iago in a nasty plight;
But, after all, what were these things to him
Whose soul was hanging on gehenna’s rim?
Nor could Emelia, who rushed in just then,
Get more attention than a clucking hen
Until she seized him boldly by the ear
And thus compelled the abstract Moor to hear :

“Wake! wake!” she cried. “Iago has been slain!
He died in most excruciating pain,
Bidding me run with utmost speed to you
And say that Desdemona was as true
As polar star, and that, as death drew nigh
With rapid feet, he could not, would not die
Till he confessed that he himself created
From nothing but his hate—for you he hated—
The wanton lies about your lady kind,
In which you soaked your damned perverted
mind.”

Like to a stately tower by earthquake shocked,
So for a moment poor Othello rocked,
And then with voice of thunder roared, “You lie!
Most wretched harlot, look me in the eye
And tell me, thou deceiving, wanton slave,
Where is the ’kerchief Desdemona gave
To Cassio as a priceless *gage d’amour?*”
With scorn Emelia looked upon the Moor,
And said in tones of infinite contempt,
“ You monstrous fool, from every sense exempt,
’Twas I who stole the rag of which you prate,
Urged to the deed by my unhappy mate
Now deader than a canvas-covered ham,
With Cassio’s sword-cut through his diaphragm.
Where is my mistress, brute? My mind misgives:
Tell me if yet my gracious lady lives.”
A look of strange confusion and affright

On dark Othello's face was seen to light,
And shaking as with cold he hoarsely said,
"Come, come with me. I think that she is dead."
Rushing like mad along the corridor,
With winged speed they reached the chamber door,
And, bursting in, beheld at one swift gaze
A sight alike to comfort and amaze,
Remembered all Othello's earthly days.
The room was brilliant; every light aglow
Gave to the scene a rather festive air,
While near the center on a sofa low
Sat Desdemona, playing solitaire;
About her shoulders, whiter than the snow,
Fell masses of her copper-colored hair,
And right before her stood her wounded toe
Cushioned and propped upon a rocking chair;
Her right hand played a card as black as jet
And in her left she held a cigarette.
With mild surprise she looked, then said, "My
dear,
I'm very glad you came; 'twas lonely here.
Emelia, too. Why, really, what's the matter?
I fancied from the town I heard some clatter."
These words were followed by an awful crash,
For poor Othello had gone all to smash—
Fainted away, this man of stub and twist—
This man, whose vigor nothing could resist,
Swooned like a girl and tumbled on the floor,

As some great tidal wave upon the shore —
An exhibition clear of what the mind
Can do with matter when 'tis so inclined.
Long time he lay unconscious, but at last
Through tender care the paroxysm passed
And he recovered, but was never more
The jealous dodo he had been before.
In fact his wife, her beauty's right asserting,
Would now and then perform a little flirting,
The innocence of which so well he knew
That, conscience smitten, often he withdrew
And left the lady to enjoy the game
Of teaching fiery suitors to be tame.
She never breathed, except to her Creator,
That once he plotted to assassinate her —
An evidence of wisdom and restraint
In woman rare, but wonderfully quaint.
They went to Venice, and were ordered next
To Mauritania, where some question vexed
About the tariff worried and perplexed
Venetian merchants. There Othello found
Himself at home upon his native ground,
And with the Moors patched up a schedule fine
On every product, saving oil and wine.
These cleverly arranged negotiations
Were very much commended by both nations,
In history called the victory of negations ;
A treaty which it took two years to make

And only some three careless months to break.
To Venice then. *En route* their ship was ta'en
By Turkish pirates and Othello slain,
The women carried off — a common rule —
To grace the Sultan's harem at Stamboul.
But passing through that narrow strait or alley
Which from the shore divides the Cyprian isle,
The pirate saw a big Venetian galley
Which swiftly overhauled him, mile by mile,
Until at length the grappling irons were cast,
And then the fight was furious and fast.
The Turk was vanquished and the captives, saved,
With gratitude eternal almost raved.
Fair Desdemona to the Captain went
With tearful thanks and, sweetly bending low,
Said, "Sir, you were by Heaven's direction sent
To save us from unmitigated woe.
In prayer for you shall all my days be spent."
She paused and peeping through her sombre veil
To mark the man who fought with such avail,
Amazed beheld her friend of long ago,
Her first admirer, gallant Cassio.

In Belmont is a castle richly set
Within a garden, where perennial trees
Border along a winding rivulet
Which plays symphonic music with the breeze;
Here shady alleys reach, wide spaces glow

With flowers that only Italy may know,
Whose perfumes to the sun like prayers arise
Of thanks for life and soft unclouded skies.
Here, strange to say, there dwelt a happy pair
Of lovers who were actually married —
Cassio and Desdemona debonair—
For Cupid's plans not always are miscarried.
Roderigo and Emelia also wed,
Trotted along the matrimonial track,
Though Rod was shy at first, but being led
Saw but one way to get his jewels back.
Across the way there lived in splendid state
A nabob, Lord Bassanio, who of late
Was captured by a certain heiress great,
Named Portia. There are very few but know
The case of Shylock and Antonio,
And how by being so amazing smart
She saved Antonio parting with his heart.
These were delightful neighbors, just the sort
To make the place an elegant resort
For painters, poets and others of that ilk,
Who claimed their infant food was muses' milk.
Sometimes the men *did* play a little high,
And Gratiano, that persistent joker,
Would oft persuade himself a bluff to try
On Roderigo, whom he plucked at poker.
But happiness prevailed, and long persisted
Until the ladies all became bridge t'whistled.

SONNETS



L'ÎLE D'AMOUR

WITHIN my life there flows a placid stream,
And in that stream a fancied island lies

To which I oft repair, when lower my skies,
To breathe Elysian air and brightly dream.

And here are gathered many things I deem
Most rare and beautiful, that I have brought
From all the fairy kingdoms of my thought
To make this island like an Eden seem.

Encircled here with flowers an image glows,
Faultless and fair, of woman's perfect mould,
Which lifts my spirit when my eyes behold
And tints the isle with colors of the rose;
But only I may know the model sweet
Which makes this image seem so incomplete.

A BUTTERFLY

BRIGHT spirit of the air, whose loving friends
The rainbow and the flowers together vied
In rivalry that would not be denied
To furnish forth the beauty that attends
Thy summer glory, till the summer ends,
Was there no tiny voice that softly cried,
When as a chrysalis thou didst abide,
“Sleep on and dream; ere long thy fortune
mends?”

And may not man in his cocoon of clay
Borrow some premonitions of a day
When like to thee the pinions of his mind
Shall glow in astral colors; when away
Shall fall the dull impediments that bind,
And all resplendent flight him to his kind?

THE FLOWER AND THE COMET

IN some land grows a flower, I know not where,
Which dwells apart far from its tender mate,
Blossoms divinely, and then learns to wait
Until Æolus sends a trusty air ;
Then drops this plant its golden pollen fair
Within the zephyrs' arms, which carry straight
Their burden over mountains desolate
To that lone other flower and leaves it there.

Celestial stranger, what erotic sun
Has shot thee from his incandescent breast ?
Upon what errand of supreme behest
Dost thou on thy tremendous mission run ?
Methinks thou art upon thy course forth hurled
To find and fructify a barren world.

NEW PROVIDENCE

LOVED by the sun and flattered by the moon,
Caressed by all the fickle airs that blow,
Yon island lies beyond the land of snow,
Calm in the purple of its bright lagoon ;
Its days, its years, one everlasting June.

Voyagers from Arragon and old Castile
Here gave repose to many a storm-tossed keel,
And felt the magic of thy changeless youth ;

Dreaming perchance that they too might divine
Some juvenescent fount, some spell in truth,
To pluck its poison from the fang of Time.
So dreamed I once beneath thy palm and vine,
And in a drowsy vision's sweet device
Fancied thy winds just strayed from Paradise.

NOVEMBER

A LONG thy dark forbidding coast there lies,
Rude buffeted by many an icy gale,
The wreck of summer's glorious argosies,
The gay armada of the leafy sail
Which cleared so gallantly the port of May
With flowery garland, and with song and clear
Sweet winds that lagged behind or led the way
Down through the golden sea of half the year.

Some gentle craft were stranded on the shoal
Of red October, some escaped to find
Upon thy frosty shores a bitter goal—
A barren margin and a cruel wind;
While all the tuneful sailors of the fleet
Are hushed forever in thy mist and sleet.

CHARLES LAMB

IN plenitude of joy, upon the heights
Which amorously overhung the tide,
There stood a lonely pine tree and defied
The blasts of autumn and the arctic nights.
The ardent sun, father of all delights,
Shed benedictions on the happy tree
Which flourished in the love of stars and sea
And lent his boughs, alike for birds and mites
Of summer life, to dwell in and rejoice.
From his perennial leaves he made a lyre
Attuned to music of the tempest's voice,
Or zephyr's witching cadence of desire.
Mateless he sat, and on the air distilled
The subtle sweets with which his heart was filled.

BUDDHA

THE little man-made gods which creeds
portray
As being rampant with a lust for praise,
Demanding prostrate homage and amaze
From creatures manufactured on a day
When Moses's Jove was modeling in clay,
How small and most inadequate they seem
When brought before thy vast mysterious
scheme,
O teacher of an older, wiser way.

I turn from Heaven eternal orthodox,
With all its sad monotony of bliss,
As, storm-beset, a vessel shuns the rocks,
And find thy thought a bright antithesis—
Reincarnation by supreme design—
Nirvana; ending in the All Divine.

SERVICE

HE who goes forth to serve goes forth to win;
And he who labors in the blast and snow
That others may some use and joyance know,
I honor more than he who sits within
The luxury of great command—akin
To rulers, with the blatant pomp and show
Which folly-fashioned men in haste bestow
Alike on greatness or successful sin.

The world's rewards go not to those brave men
Who delve the soil and burrow in the mine,
Heroic toilers! Shall they always, then,
Like beggars go, one everlasting line,
To pauper graves? O, Soul of Justice, when
Wilt thou awake to conquer, smite and shine?

BENEATH THE SNOW

BENEATH the snow the tender ferns are
sleeping,

Dreaming perchance of happiness gone by
The stream, no more a borrower of the sky,
Flows dumbly, all its summer secrets keeping,
While overhead the trees, like mourners weeping,
Whisper regrets unceasingly and sigh
For past felicity with nightly cry,
In storm or starlight, many pliants repeating.

My heart, too, hath its winter, and I wonder
At the chill flood that runs so coldly there,
Waiting for Love's sweet spring again to sunder
The icy bonds which churlish Time and Care
Have woven round it—yet I know that under
This wintry garb there sleeps a garden fair.

THE BACK LOG

THE sun's warm eye looked for a hundred
years

Upon a tree from flawless acorn sprung;
Its sturdy arms were resolutely flung
To battle with the storm among its peers;
Unnumbered feathered generations sung
Matins and vespers with melodious tongue
Safe in its leafy altars, and the tears
Of raintime and of dewtime pendant clung
From twig and burnished leaflet. Then there
came

The woodman, and the stately tree fell down,
But not to sad decay—a splendid flame
Leaped from its circles like a golden crown,
And all the sun had given, it returned
Upon the Christmas hearthstone where it burned.

CHRISTMAS AT HOME

WHEN, downward sweeping from the frozen zone,

The winds blow keenly, rough with voices rude,
Making more drear the wintry solitude
Of barren, birdless land and farmstead lone,
How those bright evenings round the fire atone
For loss of summer, and her fair display
Is half forgotten near the genial ray
Of ruddy embers on the warm hearthstone.

Range on in vain, O breath of arctic sea !

Thou canst not chill the souls to love inclined.
Each flower shall gently flourish safe from thee,
That blooms within the summer of the mind.
And so at Christmas-tide we meet, we part,
Within the sunny tropics of the heart.

SUNRISE

WHEN that pale covenant 'twixt day and
dark

Is written on the sad and sulky sky
By Morning's phantom fingers, and a sigh
Of aspiration faint preludes the lark,
Then in suspense my spirit, like a spark
Almost expiring, breathless waits to spy
The treaty broken, and the Dawn deny
The rule of Night, before the Heaven's hierarch.

My soul, which fluttered but on drooping wings,
Now thrills with something from celestial deeps;
A sense of oneness with the power it brings
Who bade the Sun arise, and watchful keeps
My soular orb within its radial rings,
Illumined by the love which never sleeps.

MARCH

A RUDE swashbuckler, puffing wind and sleet
Between the ranks of Winter and of Spring;
Holding allegiance to the Icy King
As rear guard to his majesty's retreat;
But not too loyal, prone to turn his feet
Where he can hear the pretty April sing
Of budding flowers and bluebirds on the wing,
And balmy rains that violets entreat.

Sometimes the witching softness of this lay
Takes hold upon his wild inconstant mind,
That he deserts his leige, and bends his way,
Love sick, to woo the lady coyly kind ;
And on those days when he employs his wiles,
All earth breaks forth in sunshine and in smiles.

FEBRUARY

FEW singers chaunt thy praises now, but I,
I find some beauty in thy cold gray sky,
Which as a mantle thou dost wear to hide
The poverty that men with scorn deride.

True, thou hast neither bud nor bloom nor
grain,

Nor happy bird, nor fair inviting slopes.

Linked to the winter with an icy chain
Thy chilly frown obscures upspringing hopes.

Naked and desolate thy fields lie bare
Like an old face with many lines of care.
Still thou dost ever hold within thine hand

At least one day, forethought of summer bliss,
That wakes a quiver in the torpid land,
And all thy days are dear to me for this.

MARS

SUPERB, across the marches of the sky
Thy red blaze leads the cohorts of the stars
In jeweled phalanx, while the Scorpion bars
In vain the sweep of thy vast company.
Old War God of a primal world gone by,
A dread no more with thy mysterious scars,
A dream thou art of new romance which mars
All other dreams with its immensity.

What seer may pluck from thy abyss profound
The solemn problems locked within thy breast?
What eye shall peer into thy glorious round,
And solve the secrets of our ardent quest?
This thrill'd orb waits those lips which shall
rehearse
Thy life, bright brother of the Universe.

WORDS

Polonius — What do you read, my lord ?

Hamlet — Words, words, words.

SOME words there are, ethereal and serene,
Steeped with the spirit of celestial fire ;
Some with the purple splendor of desire,
And others sparkling as the vernal green,
First on the margin of a brooklet seen.
Some ghostlike flit in pallid thin attire,
And some outsing the music of the lyre
When golden notes æolian fingers glean.

In iridescent pomp some others go,
With trumpet calls, and winged rush of thought.
Sounding the sob of penitential woe
Droop many, out of bitter grieving wrought.
Best of them all, from Heaven or Hell beguiled,
I love the lispings of a little child.

THE BACH ARIA IN G

WHEN, conjured from the palpitating breast
Of 'cello by a master's fond allure,
Emerge those notes so exquisitely pure,
So filled with solemn and celestial rest,
My spirit lifted, floats upon the crest
Of billowed harmonies in waves azure,
Exalted, while those saintly sounds endure,
As though entreated by a heavenly guest.

All things are set to music. Every soul
Yearns blindly, by some infinite decree,
To join the orchestration of the whole,
Each being set in its own proper key.
My own unknown, revealed by this at last,
Is in the omega of the gamut cast.

*In memory of my brother Howard, who died
October 24, 1871*

I.

THE pomp and purple passion of the year
Enwrapped the hills; the dazzled earth
was dressed

Like some barbaric queen in broidered vest
Of garnet and of gold, her flowing gear
So beautiful that all the atmosphere
Was luminant with color; from the west
A soft wind chanting requiems of rest
Scattered autumnal incense far and near.

That time the Everlasting loved thee most,
And, as a flame from sacred altar reft,
Thy soul sprang up to join th' immortal host,
And I was left. Alas! that I was left.
October's glory chills me like a ghost
Of some old grief, for then my heart was cleft.

II.

ONE midnight, by the river's lonely shore,
When stars were deeply awesome, and a
thrill
 Of holy aspiration caused to fill
Our eyes with quiv'ring teardrops, and the lore
Of one great seer we talked and pondered o'er—
 It seemed as though we trod upon the sill
 Of that great temple none may cross until
Death turns the noiseless hinges of the door.

Then pledged we each to each a solemn tie
 By God and by our love, that he who went
First to the land beyond our mundane sky
 Should strive again to reach this firmament;
Should come but once with some assurance high
 That death is not oblivion, but ascent.

III.

DEAR brother, hast thou kept the faith with
me?

Full many years are gathered to the past;
The hope-light of my hope is overcast
With gloomy clouds of doubt that will not flee.
Love, genius and resolve—thou hadst these
three—

And are they all of no avail at last
To break this silence so profound, so vast,
That holds thee captive in eternity?

Through many a vigil of the drowsy night
Have I sent out my soul in search of thine;
Striving to rend the bonds that held me tight
Within this clay-built castle, to divine
Thy presence for one instant of delight.
In vain, in vain. Thou madest not one sign.

7

IV.

THRICE bless'd is he whom God hath made
so sweet

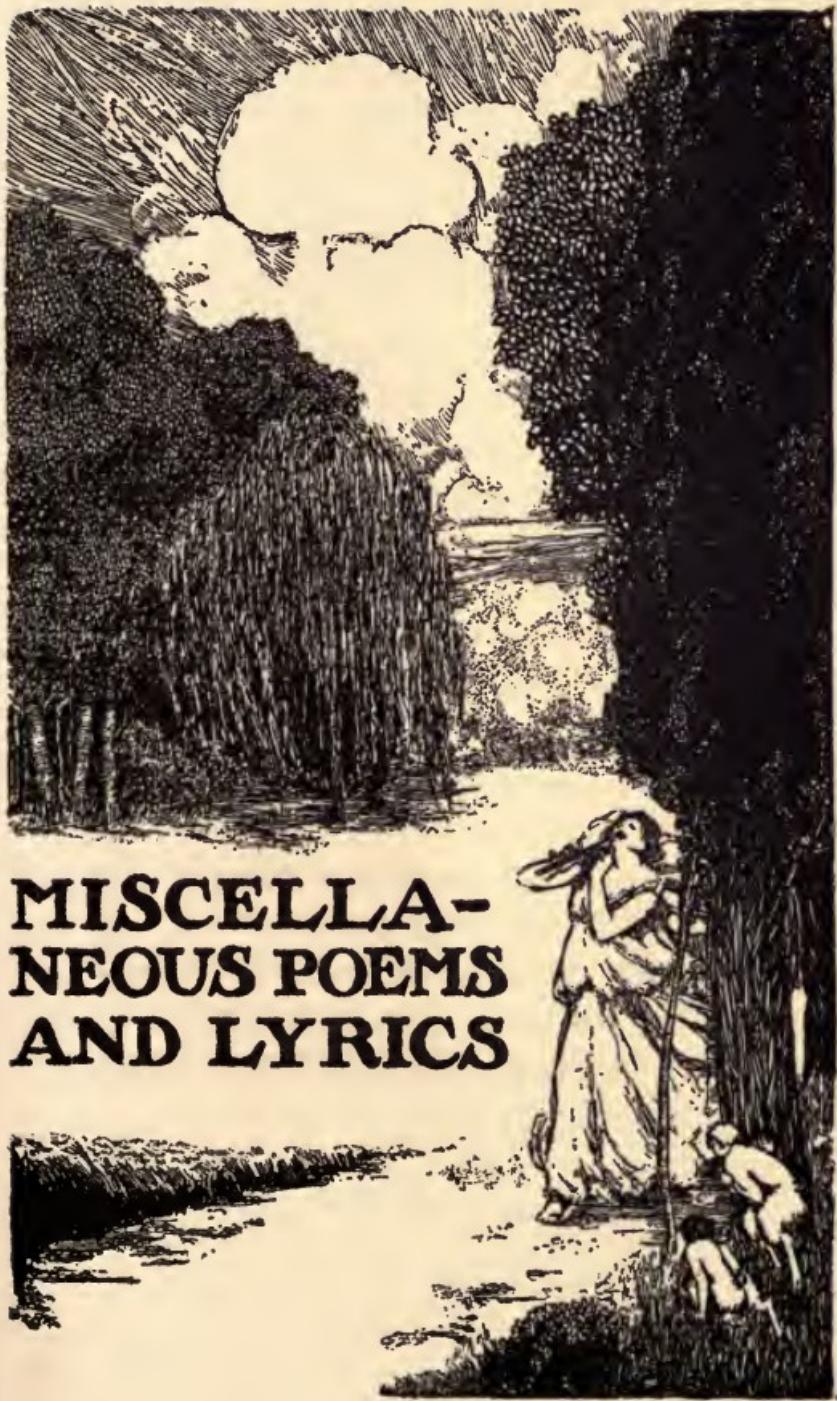
That, with a charm to Midas all unknown,
The hearts he touches, though as cold as stone,
Are turned to radiant orbs of sacred heat;
And such a man thou wert; my wandering feet
Not yet have brought me to thy peer; alone
Thou art enshrined within the central zone
Of deep affection; beautiful; complete;

Tender and brave; with courtesy and grace
Descended from some ancestor remote
Who sought the Holy Land with sword and mace
And led the charge when rang the wild war
note
Of Cœur de Leon's trumpets, or was found
Among the knights of Arthur's table round.

V.

THY portrait from the wall looks down and finds

No glance that is not fondly love inspired;
Too well we know that when thy lamp expired
Our twilight fell; and, as the year unwinds
And brings thy fatal day, our pensive minds
Recall thy virtues; leaves by autumn fired
Are wreathed about thy picture; so attired
By gentle hands, a mist our vision blinds
Of tender memories; and methinks that time
Shall not again roll many autumns o'er
Ere I may haply seek that land of thine,
And wait thy welcome on the fabled shore.
However this may be, I pray, dear heart,
Be thou not far when earth and I shall part.



MISCELLANEOUS POEMS AND LYRICS

A ROSE AROSE

A rose arose in stately pride
At blush of dawn, and spreading wide
Her crimson petals to the air,
Gave to the quaint old garden there
The attar sweetness none outvied.

The other flowers on every side
With gentle, honied envy tried
To seem unconscious, nor to care ;
A rose arose.

Just then my lady I descried
Enter the garden — dignified
And beautiful beyond compare,
The sun's kiss falling on her hair —
While all the flowers in rapture cried,
“ A rose ! A rose ! ”

IN MEXICO

FORGETTING naught of those fair days
Which seemed the sweeter for the blaze
Of tropic sun, and flowers run mad
With color, and the joy they had
In setting all our eyes agaze,

I wonder in a musing maze
If your remembrance ever strays
Along that path, if you are glad
 Forgetting naught?

I still pursue prosaic ways,
But something lost my heart dismayed,
The landscape of my life is clad
In pensive tints, half semi-sad ;
My penalty is what one pays
 For getting naught.

DEVOTION

FROM quaint old gardens in neglect,
A subtle perfume strays
That woos me till I recollect
Forgotten childish days,
And these sweet thoughts I dedicate,
Dear love, to thee always.

Sometimes from music falls a spell
Which fills my eyes with tears
Of pain, or joy, I cannot tell —
But rapt my soul appears —
And this to thee I dedicate
Ere yet it disappears.

At midnight, underneath the stars,
The angels of the night
Unlock my spirit's earthly bars,
Heaven seems almost in sight,
And this, dear love, I dedicate
To thee with sad delight.

Whatever inspiration sweet
Can move to high emprise—
Whatever noble thought is meet
For favor in thine eyes—
These, these, with love inviolate,
To thee, to thee I dedicate.

Whatever spots of crimson stain
Deface my wayward life—
Whatever deep tormenting pain
Wakes up the fiends of strife—
These, these, dear love, with hope and hate
To my own self I dedicate.

Be gentle, thou, and true, and mine ;
Forgive my passionate heart ;
Then shall my love be one with thine,
Thy love my better part—
And so, dear love, my faith, my fate
To thee, to thee I dedicate.

A DINING ROOM PANEL

A QUIET conscience and a temper sweet,
An appetite by labor given zest,
A table spread with fruit and wine and meat,
A friend to add his pleasure to the treat,
And man hath surely half of this world's best.
Whatever else is good for which he sighs
Is found or lost within a woman's eyes.

UNKNOWN

OUR eyes have spoken,
Though her voice has never
Reached my attentive ear ;
Her lips are mute, the silence all unbroken
When I am near,
And yet I know that when she laughs, her
laughter
Is blithe and clear,
And joyous as the bells that follow after
When two are fairly wed
In love before the altar,
And homeward led.

Gay were her glances,
And my heart woke newly
To chivalry and song.
Sweet dreams of knightly days and old romances
Forgotten long,
Come back again persistently elusive,
To range among
The cold sad thoughts of yesterday —intrusive—
But delicately bold,
As some faint perfume hoarded
In casket old.

*

Full well I measure,
And perceive the graces
That break my soul's repose,
The pliancy of form, the stately leisure
With which she goes,
Like animated music, or the swaying
Of wind-bent rose
That bows before a summer zephyr straying
From happy isles afar
Beyond the sunset ruby,
Or evening star.

Will some kind fairy,
When she reads these verses,
With half reluctant eyes,
Whisper from whence they came, in accents airy
As lovers' sighs ?
Will no exquisite intuition
Her heart apprise
Who is it sends this tribute on a mission
Of hardly doubtful fate ?
Ah ! she is scarcely twenty,
I eighty-eight.

HABIT

MY Lady often reimburses
Me with kisses
For sweet and laudatory verses,
Then dismisses
With airy grace, unrecollecting
She forgets 'em.
My fees, however, need collecting.
I collect 'em.
She nothing cares for my effusions
One sadly sees ;
Then why sustain my fond illusion
By paying fees?
I'll rhyme no more, thus ascertaining
Beyond a doubt —
As love for poetry is waning
And running out —
If then the habit is coercing
Of paying fees ;
And will abide, though I give up rehearsing
My melodies.

LATER

Abide it will ; my doubts are banished hence ;
Her habit strong
Continues now from pure benevolence,
Not for my song.

OTTO OF ROSES

H E said to her, smiling and bending,
“Your theory, Miss Hurd,
Of a soul with a future unending
Is sadly absurd.

“Will the scent of the roses you carry
The roses survive?
Do you fancy the perfume will tarry
Alone and alive?

“No ; just what the soul to this clay, is
Its scent to the rose,
And each at the touch of decay is
Enwrapped in repose.”

Then straight to a cabinet splendid
Turned clever Miss Hurd,
And quickly the argument ended
With scarcely a word.

“Now, sceptic,” she cried, “take this casket
Of ebon and gold,
Which, even to you, if you ask it,
A truth may unfold.

"Herein is a tiny amphora
Three thousand years old.
Oh! you call me a modern Pandora?
Don't be quite so bold."

He opened the box, half disdaining,
And found it disclose
A strange little vial containing
Pure otto of rose.

In a moment the fragrance emerging
Had burdened the air
With a sweetness that seemed to be verging
Ecstatic despair.

And he said, with a bow of surrender,
"When flowers take your part
There is nothing for me but to tender
My soul and my heart."

THE BUTTERFLY AND THE THISTLE

O! IT was ages ago, ages — it may have been æons —

When I remember myself living my life in a thistle;
Blooming alone by a forest, there where the day-breaking pæans

Of bird song awoke me; and late in the twilight
the whistle,
The mellow monotonous notes of the whip-poor-will at his vesper,
Sang me to sleep, as I gazed, half asleep, on the glory of Hesper.

Once to my blossoming bosom came, and like feather alighted,
A mystical thing of the air, with plumage of yellow and amber.
Why did I thrill with the pulses of pleasure,
of pleasure affrighted,
When to my heart I beheld that butterfly airily
clamber?

Brief was the bliss of that hour; trampled we died
in an instant.

Still doth the vision persist, faint as a dream, yet
persistent.

And when I look in your eyes, deeply with eyes
unremitting,

I see in their amber and gold the ghost of that
butterfly flitting.

ON CAPE COD

THE home of silence and romance,
An ivied tower, a glimpse of sea
Far flickering in the tender glance
Of that fair moon which beckons me.

The home of silence and repose,
Of breezy down and yellow sand,
The tangled rapture of the rose
Whose sweet wild breathing scents the land.

Land of long days, and sunset shrouds,
Of unobstructed winds that fly
And fill with silver island clouds
The semicircle of the sky.

The home of silence—solitudes—
Where, far from all the world of pain,
The spirit finds celestial moods
And comes into its own again.

The home of silence and romance,
Where grows felicity anew,
Where idle days I gave to chance,
And all the perfumed nights to you.

BOBOLINK

WHEN first he came among us, in the blithe
and bonny spring,
He was poor, he was thin, but was gay;
And his merry voice resounded with a silver bell-
like ring,
And in the low green meadows he was always on
the wing,
Every day.

But a change came o'er his spirit, when the moons
had numbered three,
From the flush and the glow of that June.
No more he rang his changes over meadow or on
tree,
For, prosperous, and fat, and rich, no time for
song had he—
Not a tune.

My friend is like the Bobolink: in poverty, and
young,
He was gay, he was bright, he was glad;
But, alas! as “fortune’s minion” the jest upon
his tongue
Has vanished with his brightness and the song is
left unsung—
’Tis too bad.

IN BERLIN

'TWAS in the Thier, a woodland garden
sweet,

But half secluded from the urgent street,
He led the lady of his doubts, to bid
Farewell, ere taking flight for old Madrid,
And make with grace a beautiful retreat.

Through her soft hand he felt the pulses beat,
And thought of things that were, and were not
meet,

Regretting that the verdure but half hid.

'Twas in the Thier.

The pathos of her slow reluctant feet
Seemed clever acting, exquisitely neat—
He said as much—and then her eyes were hid,
While to the earth a crystal drop there slid;
And he surrendered with immense defeat;—

'Twas in the tear.

FIDELIS PAUPERTAS

IN tatters clad my mistress came,
And brought me ample dower of shame.
They called her "Poverty," and I
In vain essayed her love to fly,
But near me she would still remain.

I heaped upon her bitter blame,
Yet faithfully she loves the same,
Though like a beggar oft I sigh
 In tatters clad.

Fidelity, how sweet the name
When joined with beauty, wealth or fame,
But when allied with her we try
To ban, avoid, detest, decry,
Fidelity may go to flame
 In tatters clad.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS

"The Butterfly Press of Philadelphia is to be held responsible for the issue of a volume of alleged verse by W. H. Howells, which also belongs to the Ephemera in the matter of weight and longevity, but unhappily not in the liveliness of color and movement which belong to the Class.

"*The Rescue of Desdemona* might be more properly assigned to the flittermouse species on account of its evasive obscurity and the erratic incertitude of its literary flight. The only mitigating circumstance we can discover in regard to its publication is that the edition is limited to a few hundred copies for distribution to subscribers only, and in this the public is to be congratulated.

"We venture to predict that if the author had so many friends before the issue of the book, a corporal's guard will represent all that are left to him after its distribution.

"The query intrudes itself, however, at this point as to whether the author would not consider \$1.50 per friend as ample compensation for the loss? If so, of course we have no more to say."

—*The Denver Dirk.*

"After several centuries of sentimental sympathy for the only Desdemona, it has come to pass that one William Hooper Howells has had the audacity to tamper with the story of that unfortunate heroine, and violently assailing all historic fact, insists upon her rescue in spite of every protest raised by Time and Truth.

"The manner in which he manages to save the life of the lady is so much more gruesome and horrible than her histrionic dissolution, that no one can labor through the turgid labyrinth of the tale without profanely grinning at the awful sacrilege.

"Near the base of Mt. Olympus has lately been discovered a volcanic cavern to the impenetrable obscurity of which we would gladly consign, with motives absolutely impeccable, *The Rescue of Desdemona*—and its author."—*The Asheville Asp.*

"*The Rescue of Desdemona, and Other Verse*, by W. H. Howells, makes so wide a breach in the ramparts of the commonplace, that any one who cares to enter the citadel of Humor, the almost forbidden city of superior Foolishness, can walk there almost without an effort for \$1.50.

"Our readers must be careful not to attribute this work to a literary celebrity of the same patronymic whose tender solicitude in regard to the

dignity of his calling never permits him the lambent levity which marks *The Rescue of Desdemona.*"—*The Syracuse Sach Lac.*

"Joy to our sanctum found entrance with *The Rescue of Desdemona, and Other Verse*, by W. H. Howells. The mechanical production of the book is altogether desirable and studiously artistic, while the contents—whimsical, quaint, original and highly interesting—are refreshingly promotive of 'innocent merriment.'"—*Chicopee Saccharine Smear.*

* * * * *

"After the foregoing animadversions there is little left to say in regard to Mr. Howells' performance—*The Rescue of Desdemona*—except to remark *en passant* that while by nature and education we are averse to acrimonious controversy and all the grosser forms of physical persuasion belonging to the submerged tenth, we feel a vagrant inclination to come into personal contact with this author, which we trace solely to an aspiration 'to do him good' and perhaps convince him that a long period of silence on the part of the Howells family would prove a national 'consolation devoutly to be wished.'"—*The Buffalo Biff.*

NOTE

The foregoing Opinions of the Press were carefully prepared, not necessarily for publication, but as an evidence of good faith, and with a benevolent desire to furnish incompetent reviewers with "something to sit upon"—in other words, nest eggs of criticism from which may be hatched by easy mental incubation fine broods of diatribe and cheerful condemnation.

W. H. H.

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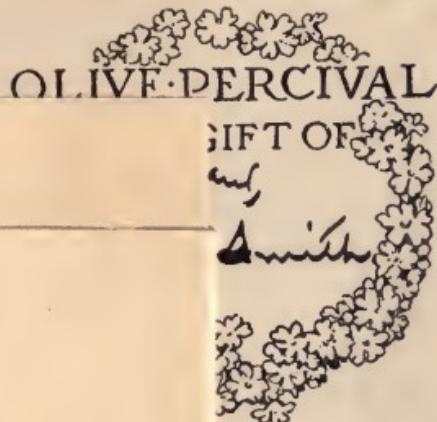
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